

Wandering needs to be examined

Dear Jo:

We are worried about my 81 year old father. He has lived with us ever since my mother died 12 years ago. He is very much a part of our family and hopefully will remain so in the years to come.

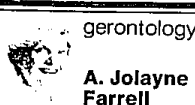
Our worries stem from his habit of wandering. We live near a shopping mall and every day Dad like to go over and browse. Most of the salespeople know him and are friendly. He usually stays in the mall until dinner time, and then comes home. Sometimes he gets a little disoriented and is unable to find his way home — so when he's late, we go over and get him.

Last week, he wandered to another part of town and got lost. He was brought home by the police. We were embarrassed, but felt that he should still keep his freedom and continue with his daily outings.

Yesterday we were approached by our neighbors who said they could not tolerate my father's behavior, particularly with the police involvement, and that he should be "put away."

It's interesting to note that Dad is not worried about his wandering and getting lost at all.

So, I guess things have pretty well come to the crisis point. We could



gerontology

A. Jolayne Farrell

use some advice from you, a gerontologist.

Please answer my letter in the paper as our "well meaning" neighbors read your column.

Mrs. K.S.

Dear Mrs. S.:

One of the most common reasons for admission of elderly persons to a nursing home is wandering. Families fear that harm will come to their vulnerable older members so they seek a protective environment for them.

Before attempting to manage your father's wandering behavior, you need to know answers to the following questions:

When your father wanders, what is he seeking?

When does the behavior most frequently occur?

How would the problem be solved if he was 40 instead of 81?

Do you feel that his present setting is too restrictive?

How dangerous is his wandering? What psychological need or energy process appears to be causing his wandering?

Some of the common causes of wandering are: tension, boredom, environmental or situational chaos, past work patterns and changes in the weather.

From your letter, it appears that your father's wandering is not very serious and so long as he is able to stay in familiar territory, he should be quite safe. Before he goes out you should make sure that he is carrying identification so if he does get lost he can be helped.

You may want to buy him a watch with an alarm on it — set for close to dinner time, so he can be reminded to start home. Also you would be wise to have a chat with your local police explaining to them his problem and that if he gets lost again you would appreciate that he be brought home in a quiet way.

About your "well meaning" neighbors, your father's life style is (frankly stated) none of their business.

I wish you the best of luck in working out your father's problem. He is fortunate to have a caring daughter like you who has his best interests at heart in wanting to keep him at home with his family.

Readers can write to Jolayne Farrell at P.O. Box 66, Postal Station G, 1075 Queen Street East, Toronto, Ontario, M4M3E8, Canada.

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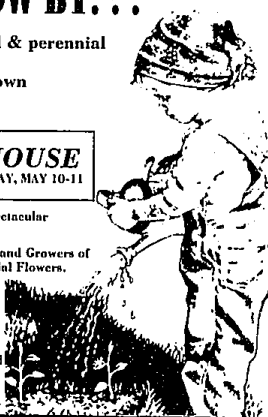
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Grant goes to OU professor for research

An Oakland University microbiologist is using genetic engineering to understand how bacteria become resistant to antibiotics.

Satish Walla of Auburn Hills has received a grant of \$11,000 from Providence Hospital to study the mechanism of "antibiotic resistance," a problem faced by hospitals across the nation.

A major concern to hospital personnel are strains of bacteria that do not die, even when treated with the most potent new antibiotics. These bacteria not only live, they can multiply and produce new strains.

WALLA is working with Dr. Tom Madhavan, chief of infectious diseases at Providence, in attempting to find answers to the problem.

Walla is looking at the DNA or building block molecule in the bacteria to try and determine genetic changes that might occur to produce an enzyme that creates resistance against drugs.

Walla said that understanding the mechanisms by which these changes occur will help scientists trace and combat the bacteria.

SUCCESS will have great economic implications and help reduce dangers from hospital-contracted infections, Walla said.

The professor earlier received another \$3,000 grant from Providence for the first phase of his study.

That work was reported in late March at the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Microbiology in Washington, D.C.



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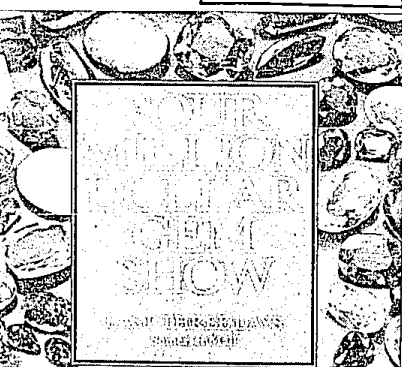
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